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Wiesner concludes his paper by the statement: "The physiological end of the absorption of light is no longer a secret, and I have at the same time detected a new function of chlorophyll."—*Annales des Sciences Naturelles, September.*

To the above may be added a brief reference to a note by Déherain, in which he states that he had obtained results different from those of Wiesner, and that he is soon to criticise further Wiesner's paper.

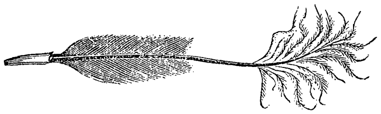
Botanical News.—*Trimen's Journal of Botany* for December, besides articles of local interest, contains an interesting discussion of some questions of botanical nomenclature, by J. Ball; some contributions to plant-chemistry, by A. H. Church; notes on Japanese and Bermudian ferns, and notes on some hybrid brambles, by W. O. Focke; Julius Wiesner's work on the influence of light and radiant heat on the transpiration in plants is abstracted. The journal contains a discriminating review of Darwin's Different Forms of Flowers on Plants of the same Species.

The Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club for November and December, contains Wolle's enumeration of Fresh Water Algæ, which embraces upwards of 150 forms new to the United States, and 24 species new to science. Mr. Meehan describes the habits of *Gentiana andrewsii.* Mr. C. F. Austin describes *Danthonia faxoni* n. sp., and two new mosses, while Mr. Davenport presents a description of a new fern, *Cheilanthes viscida,* from California.

ZOÖLOGY.[1]

Peculiar Feathers of the young Ruddy Duck.—The unusually narrow, rigid and acuminate tail-feathers which constitute a character of the genus *Erismatura* are much more peculiar at an early stage of their growth. The curious structure will doubtless be new to most readers of the Naturalist.

The accompanying cut will give an idea of the general appearance of the feather, which is, in fact, double, one complete feather growing on the end of another, and the two being dissimilar in structure.



To the naked eye the terminal feather appears to be simply a prolongation of the shaft of the other, as a slightly swollen, stiff stem projecting an inch or more beyond the true web, and bearing upon its terminal half a bunch of loose, disconnected barbs, more or less recurved, and fringed with light fluffy barbules. With a lens this terminal portion is seen to be a distinct feather, complete in all its parts, borne upon the end of the other. It has a simple cylindrical barrel for half its length; at the point where the vane begins, it sends off a bunch of barbs constituting an after-shaft; it then becomes channeled along the under side, and gives off its loose barbs alternately on either side, forming a disconnected vane; thus presenting all the more essential parts of a complete feather (whether barbicels and hooklets are present or not I cannot now determine for want of a microscope). The proximal half of this duplex affair is in all respects a perfect feather of ordinary character. The distinction of the two feathers is clearly seen at the point where the end of the channeled and densely-pithy shaft changes into the enlarged, cylindrical and nearly hollow quill of the terminal supplementary feather. The relations of the two being such, they must have sprouted from the same matrix, one after the other, the true feather following after the temporary downy one, which is deciduous, and falls off when the duckling is about ten inches long. The process is essentially, the same, of course, as that by which the downy tip of an ordinary contour-feather is shed; but it might not be expected to occur in the case of such a particularly strong and stiff rectrix as Erismatura possesses.—*Elliott Coues, Turtle Mountain, Dakota, July,* 1874.

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[1] The departments of Ornithology and Mammalogy are conducted by Dr. Elliott Coues, U. S. A.

NOTE ON RANELLA CLATHRATA Gray.—Last winter I collected the above species at Cedar Keys, Fla. I found the shells in shallow water, occupying *dead* shells of *Mercenaria mortoni*; also attached to the pretty little coral, *Oculina diffusa*. Through Mr. Bland I submitted specimens to Geo. W. Tryon, Jr., who, after a careful examination, identifies them as above. This is a west coast form not heretofore known to exist on the eastern coast, and adds another species to the list common to both oceans. *Ranella caudata* is our usual form, and abundant in Florida.—*W. W. Calkins.*

SPARROWS AND PEEWEES.—My residence is in the country (Chickies, Lancaster, Co., Pa.), and for about forty years the peewee flycatcher (*Sayornis fuscus*) has nested under my portico, until 1877, when several European or domestic sparrows (*Fringilla domestica*) appeared, and not only attacked the resisting peewees during several days when these were repairing their nest, but as fast as one party built the other demolished, tearing the nest to pieces and littering the porch below, without renewing or occupying the premises.—*S. S. Haldeman.*

THE PRAIRIE CHICKEN IN CALIFORNIA.—A fact of considerable interest to our sportsmen has recently been noted in connection with the prairie chicken. The absence of this choice bird of the prairies among the feathered game of California has been felt, and efforts have been made by individual enterprise to introduce and acclimate it. They have not been successful, and the possibility of this desirable result has remained in doubt. But it seems that the bird is solving the problem for us. Starting from the prairies of Nebraska, it has followed the overland railroad westward, its appearance being noted from time to time in localities along the line where it had never before been seen. Gradually it followed westward until it reached Battle mountain and Winnemucca, on the line of the Central Pacific in Nevada. From these points it extended its wanderings northward into Surprise Valley, in north-eastern California, and is gradually spreading through the valleys extending down from Mount Shasta. Its diffusion over the whole State is now believed to be only a question of time and reasonable forbearance on the part of gunners.—*Salinas* (*California*) *Index.*—*Communicated by R. E. C. Stearns.*

On the Form of the Stapes in Dipodomys.—Upon making an examination of the bony ear of this animal recently, from specimens sent me through the courtesy of Professors Baird and Coues, from the National Museum, I was struck with the peculiarity in shape of the stapes, which did not present the usual flat base fitting into the fenestra ovalis. The part in question was very thin, inflated, hollow internally, with a salient rim jutting inwards, and a similar salient horizontal border or rim bounding it externally; from this flat rim the grooved crura arose, and united distally; an osseous tube giving passage to a vessel and nerve traverses the crural opening, as in many other Rodents and Insectivora. Looking at the base of the stapedial bone from the side above and little oblique it reminds one strongly of a minute hat with a rounded crown and narrow rim, while a view from the side calls to mind the shape of the carapace of an *Emys.* On making comparisons of my sketches with the remarkable collection of preparations of the internal ears of various vertebrates made by Professor Hyrtl, and now in the museum of the Philadelphia College of Physicians, to which I was very kindly permitted access through the courtesy of Dr. Bache, I found that the base of the stapes was similarly inflated with the convex surface dipping into the fenestrum, in *Hyrax*, *Mephitis*, *Erithizon*, and *Phalangista.*—*John A. Ryder.*

ANTHROPOLOGY.

Pliocene Man.—Prof. Cope has recently made an important addition to our knowledge of this subject in North America. He has received from Oregon a collection of fossils from an ancient lake-bed of Pliocene age which include the following species of mammalia: *Elephas primigenius*, *Equus occidentalis*; *E. major*; *Auchenia hesterna*; *A. major* Ow.; *A. vitakeriana* sp. nov.; *Mylodon* vel genus affine; *Lutra piscinaria.* Of birds: bones not distinguishable from those of *Podiceps occidentalis* and *Podibymbus podiceps*; others of *Graculus* similar in size to those of *Graculus penicillatus.* Fishes: *Catostomidæ* and *Cyprinidæ* of extinct species of *Alburlnops* and *Anchybopsis.* Mingled in the same deposit in undistinguishable relation, were found